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ABSTRACT

This report is an educational guide for parents of young children with reading problems. It explains the prereading skills, such as sitting quietly, paying attention, and listening, that must be mastered before a child can learn to read and then describes nine approaches used by public schools for teaching reading. The report offers practical ways in which a parent can be involved in the child's reading development and stresses the importance of home atmosphere and parental example. Two types of games that relate specifically to reading are suggested: those used primarily to interest a child in reading and those that teach specific reading skills. Examples of each type and suggested applications are provided. Appendixes include books for additional study on this topic, an annotated list of children's books designed to improve reading skills, and a list of games that help children learn and enjoy reading. A source book for designing games at home is described in detail. (MAI)

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# TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ:
# A PARENT'S GUIDE

RIGHT TO READ

State Board of Education
Illinois Office of Education
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State Superintendent of Education

CS003 849

# TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ:
# A PARENT'S GUIDE

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Many children are on the road to having reading problems when they begin school. It is important that special assistance be given to every child who is having difficulties. Most books written on this subject are designed for the teacher and not for the parent, yet it is only natural that a young child will turn to parents when having a problem. Sometimes it is hard for you, as parents, to know how to help your child. It is our hope that this booklet will enable you to gain insight into your child's reading problems. We have included a description of the basic reading programs used in the public schools and suggested many games and other activities which you might use to help your child develop interest in reading and acquire the basic knowledge to become a successful reader.

## PRE-READING

Modern reading teachers tend to emphasize the importance of skills which are acquired by a child before formal reading instruction begins (i.e. schooling). The *pre-reading* period contributes to the child's *readiness* for a formal reading program. Ideally, a child is expected to be "ready" upon entering the first grade.

Reading is a developmental process. That is, a child must gradually develop and accumulate learned skills to the point wher the child is able to perform the complex process of reading. Children arrive at this stage at different rates. One child may be ready at age four and another at age six, seven or even eight. Reading at a younger age does not mean a child has superior intelligence just as reading at an older age does not mean that one is less intelligent.

Many elements are involved in a child's ability to learn how to read. Intelligence is only one of these factors. It is important for parents to keep this in mind--especially if their child is one who seems to be having some difficulty in learning to read. Most children can and do learn to read, but because some may learn faster than others and a few may already be reading when they enter first grade, the child who is having trouble may become discouraged and develop a negative attitude toward reading. Help your child to maintain a positive attitude, as learning to read will be more difficult if your child loses confidence or decides that the task is not at all that important. There are many things you can do to help your child. (Some specific suggestions can be found on pp. 12-15 of this booklet.) Remember that initial success or failure at learning to read has a lasting effect on one's school career and ability to understand one's environment.

There are a number of skills which must be mastered before a child learns to read. What are these pre-requisites? A partial answer to this question may be found if we consider the many demands the teacher will make upon the beginning

student. The student will be expected to sit quietly, to pay attention, and to listen. Teachers everywhere agree that good listening habits are indispensable to learning in a classroom setting. A beginning reader must also be able to discriminate audibly and visually; must be able to perceive directions and positions in space, to realize that materials are read from left to right on the page (in some languages the reverse is true). Reading materials should be appropriate for the child's level of oral language development. This development is dependent upon the child's personal encounters with the surroundings and upon the manner in which words, phrases, and sentences have been used to explain these contacts with reality. For example, if a child has never seen a cow either live or in a picture, or if the child has never thought about a "cow," reading about cows may be no more than an exercise. Your child's early experiences in a variety of settings can contribute to his or her understanding of the objects, processes and people which will become the subject matter of later reading.

A child's ability to learn is also dependent on his or her physical well being. It goes without saying that a child's general health must be good and that he or she must be able to hear and see within normal ranges. Children's eyes should be checked at regular intervals throughout their childhood. When your child begins school, it would be wise to have his or her eyes and ears tested.

## APPROACHES TO READING

A variety of approaches are being used to teach children to read. All or any of them have proved to be effective in different classroom situations. The teacher is, of course, the most important variable. Any of the reading techniques in the hands of a good teacher who understands and believes in the method being used, and has effective techniques to vary the learning experience and keep children interested, will be successful. (A teacher may even employ more than one method, depending upon a particular child's needs and the situation.) It may be helpful for you to know more about some of the reading approaches that are being used today. Descriptions of nine approaches are given below.

### Phonics

"New" methods in reading are often revivals of older approaches. One of these is phonics, first used between 1890 and 1920. Phonics is simply a tool for helping new readers translate (decode) the written word into spoken language. Many teachers, therefore, talk about "breaking the code." Once the tool has been learned, the student can decode the letter symbol 's' (the grapheme) into a particular sound 's' (the phoneme). The phonics approach may be either synthetic or analytic. The distinguishing factors between these two methods are the varying degree of attention given to the *meaning* of particular words, the teaching of *letter sounds*, and the development of a *sight vocabulary* in the beginning phase.

The *Synthetic Approach* starts with the study of isolated letter sounds. Once the child has learned these sounds, they are "blended" into syllables or words. For example, using the word "bat," the teacher would first teach the "alphabetic letters 'b'; 'a'; 't'" and their corresponding sounds /b/; /a/; /t/ in isolation. Once the child has become familiar with the individual

symbol-sound relationships, the teacher helps the child combine these three sounds to produce the word "bat." Alphabet-learning, therefore, is the first prerequisite to learning to read through the synthetic phonics approach. Typically, children might move through the following stages:

1) Learn the 26 letters of the alphabet.

2) Learn the way a letter changes sound when placed in different letter combinations. For example, the changing initial sound of 'p' in "push," "spot," and "lamp."

3) Learn to put this knowledge of sounds together to sound out syllables or whole words.

One drawback of the synthetic phonics approach is that there is a tendency to distort the sounds of letters in isolation: 'b'; 'a'; 't' can become "buhahtuh." Teachers and parents must be on the alert to prevent this problem from developing.

The *Analytic Approach* begins with the sounding of known whole words (sight words) rather than with the sounding of individual letters first. The teacher has the children sound out the word (e.g. "bat"). After they recognize the written word and feel at ease pronouncing it, the teacher (in the early stages) breaks the word down into its component sounds: /b/; /a/; /t/. Later, the children themselves, either individually or in a group, differentiate between the various sounds in the word being analyzed. Again we have three fundamental stages:

1) Learn the letter of the alphabet. (This is basic for any phonics approach.)

2) Learn the sound of a whole word - "bat."

3) Learn the individual sounds that form a word: /b/; /a/; /t/.

Because the analytic approach stresses the pronunciation of the whole word before component sounds are learned, more emphasis is initially placed on the meanings of words and stresses than in the synthetic method - the building of a *sight vocabulary*. The teacher gives the children a group of known sight words to study which contain the particular component sounds that they are required to learn. For example, the children might be exposed to the words "girl," "good," and "grape" to teach the initial /g/ sounds.

In contrast, the synthetic approach does *not* stress sight words or the meanings of words. This method assumes that by the time the child starts grade one, he or she has already learned some two or three thousand basic words and will, therefore, be able to recognize a word and its meaning once the child has been taught the sounds of particular letters in combination with other letters. For example, once the child is able to pronounce (or approximate the correct pronunciation) of a common word such as "bread," he or she would be expected to know its meaning.

During the past two decades, a number of educators searching for a reliable reading approach have claimed that phonics would "cure" all reading problems. Although phonics is an indispensable tool for decoding written symbols with

meaningful sounds, and should, therefore, form an integral part of any reading program, it is not a wonder drug. For well over a hundred years, phonics has been used as the basic approach for teaching reading but by itself, it has never eliminated reading problems. Combined with other methods, phonics often proves to be an effective tool in teaching basic communication skills.

The phonics approach has been discovered as a separate reading method yet phonics should be part of all reading programs, since *words* and *individual sounds* are two basic elements always dealt with in teaching children to read. A successful reading program will be flexible enough to permit the use of whatever method seems most appropriate at a particular time with a particular student.

## The Whole Word Approach

This is a sight word method for teaching beginning reading which begins with the meaningful reading of whole words, short sentences and simple stories. New words (chosen for their high frequency among young children) are pre-taught by the teacher and later appear in the child's reading material.

Phonics, a basic factor in the various whole word programs, is gradually introduced and becomes an increasingly larger part of the curriculum through grades one, two and three. However, phonics always remains secondary to the learning of "whole" words.

Numerous reading series use this approach for teaching reading. They have frequently been criticized for the dullness of their stories and the artificial speech patterns produced by the constant repetition of a few words. Here is a typical example:

> Ah, ah! look, look!
> See Tom run.
> Tom runs.
> See Tom run fast![1]

Dissatisfaction with much whole word reader material has led to the development of alternative programs that try to utilize the language and interests of children. Retaining the whole word philosophy, one improved reading series substitutes the true speech of children for the stilted language of most readers. Another program growing out of criticism of the whole word approach is the language experience method.

## Language Experience

The language experience method is used in beginning reading, remedial reading, and as a supplement to other approaches beyond the beginning stage. Put in the language of a non-reader, the rationale for this approach may be stated:

> What I can think about, I can talk about. What I can say, I can write - or someone can write for me. What I can write, I can read. I can read what I can write and what other people write for me to read.[2]

Language experience programs turn to the child's own experiences and styles of language for the core of the curriculum. Unlike other reading approaches, the

majority of the reading materials used is created by the students. The child's vocabulary is allowed free expression in determining what it is that the child will read and write. The individual's use of the language and personal and cultural experience are not separated from the formal learning environment.

Through the use of the child's imagination and creative energies, learning how to read is prevented from becoming rote memory work. The child in class might relate a story about life, or something seen or perhaps someone visited. The only requirement is that the story should be about something that interests the child. First the teacher, and later the child, writes the story told by the pupil. This child and his or her friends can then see the written experiences of the storyteller. Perfection in the use of language need not be cultivated at this stage. The important thing is that the child learns to read things that interest him or her. This method is based on the obvious psychological truth that it is easier to learn something that is of great personal interest than something which is of little or no interest.

Later, the student learns that reading materials other than self-created materials involves the communication of meaning. The student also gradually learns from friends' stories that other people's writings can be as interesting as one's own. As the child develops greater skill, he or she learns to write the stories told by other children. Later, the children can work in groups and create and write group stories. They can make up their own fairy tales or think of new endings for traditional stories.

To help the child to remember some of the more difficult words that appear in the stories, a "word bank" might be created. The teacher could help each child develop a personal word bank. Later, a "class word bank" might include basic words that all the children should know: words that would improve each child's ability to tell stories.

A simple diagram illustrates the basic steps of this approach.[3]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The child expresses a thought. (SPEECH) | The child or teacher writes the spoken idea. (ENCODING) | The child reads his or her written story. (READING: DECODING AND COMPREHENDING). |

COMMUNICATION OF MEANING

This method, however, is not without its limitations since it is based to such a great extent on the child's own language and personal experiences. Unless the teacher is skillful, it is possible that the child might not extend his or her use of the language. "Alternative" patterns of speech may not be learned. There is also the danger that an unsophisticated teacher might not help the child broaden his or her experiences through stories about people outside of the local peer group. Encouraging children to read "library books" must be a vital part of the later stage of the language experience program. Opportunities for field trips which extend experiences become another prerequisite to a successful language experience program. In addition, teachers' aides need to be available to help children write down their own stories.

## Words-in-Color

The words-in-color approach is a "colorful" phonics method for teaching letter sounds. The 47 different sounds of standard American English are presented as color differences. Sounds that are somewhat similar have only a shade variation within the same color.

With this method a young child must not only learn the relationship between letters and sounds, but must now be able to distinguish between a wide range of color differences. A child with vision problems could obviously have a great deal of difficulty with this method.

There are other problems with using words-in-color. Because this approach involves the memorization of color and symbol associations which then must be further associated with sounds, it is more complicated and roundabout than other methods. Words-in-color might be very useful when teaching reading to a child whose native language is not English as the use of color calls attention to details in words which might otherwise be overlooked.

## Linguistics

The linguistics method - which favors "decoding" (or phonics) as the primary approach for teaching reading - is really not a "method" at all. It is a group of ideas gathered together by linguists from different linguistic schools and presented as teaching techniques and materials.

Because a linguist's interest in language use is not limited merely to language decoding (reading), these teachers are also concerned with sentence patterns, voice intonation and the stress of important words within the sentence.

This system depends, to a great extent, on rote memory work, and teaches irregular words and language patterns in isolation from the child's normal language experience. Its use of artificial readings based on consistent symbols and sound patterns often results in dull reading material.

## The Initial Teaching Alphabet (I.T.A.)

This is a relatively new approach, having first been introduced in England in 1960. It is generally used when other methods have failed. I.T.A. (the Initial Teaching Alphabet) approaches beginning reading instruction through modification of the traditional alphabet. It consists of 44 symbols, each representing a single consistent sound - including 24 letters from the regular alphabet (only q and z are omitted). I.T.A. is not meant to be a total program but is meant to simplify reading by removing problems caused by traditional spelling. After children develop fluency and comprehension, they move towards the conventional alphabet.

However, I.T.A. would not lend itself well to either the language experience or the individualized method approaches since they both rely on either basic library materials or words and names that the child sees in everyday life. The The initial teaching alphabet is not designed for use beyond the beginning stages of reading instruction.

The advantage of this method is the high degree of regularity between sounds and their graphic representations. However, many educators feel that such an

advantage is outweighed by the following disadvantages:

1) At the initial stage of reading, the child is limited to books and other material that are written in this special alphabet. Reading in the classroom becomes isolated from reading in general outside the school environment.

2) Parents who want to help their children to improve their reading may not be familiar with the I.T.A. and therefore cannot assist them when they have reading problems.

## Programmed Instruction in Reading

Programmed instruction is a system that allows children to move at their own speed. However, it is unlike individualized programs because there is a standard curriculum which all students must cover. Materials are available in the form of workbooks or simple computer programs.

The instructional materials for this approach have been broken into a series of steps. Each step in the learning process requires an understanding of all previous steps. The children learn new material, respond to questions, check their answers and immediately find out if their responses are right or wrong. If they are right, they may proceed to the next step; if they are wrong, they find out why, must correct their errors and may then proceed. Material that the child has difficulty with or has forgotten can easily be reviewed by referring back to earlier lessons with completed questions and answers.

The scope of this program is limited, however. Critical reading is not a major feature of programmed reading. The questions and the student's answers are limited in the range of material they cover. There is little interaction between the students in this program or even with the teacher. The interaction is almost entirely limited to the student and the student's workbook or computer program. Although such simple stimulus and response learning can be a useful aid in acquiring a knowledge of letter-sound relationships in a basic sight vocabulary, it tends to separate the learning of skills from normal everyday use.

## The Basal Reader

The basal reader is the most commonly used program today for teaching reading. Basal reader programs are often utilized by proponents of all of the other methods except I.T.A. (Initial Teaching Alphabet) and W.I.C. (words-in-color). Three basal phonic programs are Lippincott's *Basic Reading; Open Court Basic Readers* and *Phonetic Keys to Reading*; while *The New Basic Readers Curriculum Foundation Series* (Scott, Foresman, H. Robinson, M. Monroe, & A. Artley) and the *Basal Progressive Choice Reading Program* (M. Woolman), are examples of whole word basal reader programs.

Basal reading is "aimed at the systematic development of reading ability by means of a series of books or other materials especially suitable for each successive stage of reading development."[4] This program is highly structured. The children use reading-readiness workbooks. There are three or four pre-primers, a primer and a first reader. Supplemental materials consist of word-and-phrase cards, letter cards and picture cards related to the stories.

The program beyond the first grade usually includes two readers each in grades two and three, and one reader each for grades four, five and six. Junior high material is available for some basal reader programs. Activity books are always included to provide a variety of projects both for the individual and for the group. Frequently, a basal reading series will include extra related materials such as slides, tapes, filmstrips, posters and games.

The basal reader program has a specific number of vocabulary words introduced at each grade level, as well as a basic sight vocabulary for each grade. The following chart suggests the expected rates of learning of a sight vocabulary:

CUMULATIVE VOCABULARY IN BASAL READERS[5]

| Basal Reader Grade Level | Cumulative Sight Vocabulary |
|---|---|
| First Grade | |
| Pre-primers | 40 to 110 |
| Primer | 120 to 310 |
| First Reader | 230 to 475 |
| Second Grade | 950 to 1700 |
| Third Grade | 1900 to 3300 |
| Fourth Grade | 2800 to 3500 |
| Fifth Grade | 4500 to 6000 |
| Sixth Grade | 6000 to 8500 |

Basal reading helps teachers to group children of varying levels of reading ability. Another obvious advantage of basals is the carefully graded set of materials that allow students easy movement from one stage to the next. Basals also provide the teacher with a wealth of materials already organized by reading specialists and offer teachers' manuals which have minutely detailed teaching suggestions.

However, basal reading programs in general have been criticized for: 1) being overly structured and not allowing enough flexibility in the way the program is presented; 2) using language constructions that are unnatural; 3) being largely white middle-class oriented. (Recently, there has been a trend to include multi-racial children in urban settings[6] though most basals still focus on a white middle-class family.) Non-whites, as well as working-class children, have difficulty in identifying with and relating to materials which are often alien to their personal experiences (i.e., home environment, neighborhood, etc.).

## The Individualized Approach

Although the basal reading program allows children to progress through the materials, achieving at different levels, the system is not really individualized. There is a set program with specific reading materials that must be covered. Such reading material must be completed even if the student does not find the material interesting. Most adults do not enjoy reading boring materials. Children are not unlike adults in this respect but the harm done to a child who is forced to read irrelevant materials can be permanent. When a child is learning the skill of reading, he or she may be quickly and completely "turned off" by dull required reading. A fundamental point of the individualized program is *reading enjoyment.* It is well-known that many children of various ages, as well as many adults, have mastered the skill of reading but use it very little. Reading is not an end in itself. It is a means of learning, of enjoying, of furthering personal growth and extending one's knowledge of life in general. There would seem to be little sense in learning to read and then using this skill only on an infrequent basis.

The individualized reading program assumes that the skill of reading should not be separated from reading enjoyment. The major points of the program can be summarized as follows:

1) There is no basic curriculum that everyone must follow.

2) Pupils select words they want to learn and materials they want to read (learning enjoyment).

3) Children move at their own pace. This does not mean, of course, that teachers do not try to stimulate the learning process.

4) Individual instructions: the teacher does not concentrate on group instruction. In any particular class, many students need very little help. This frees the teacher to work with children who need extra attention.

5) The reading materials include children's library books. Or, if this program is combined with the language experience method, the library books would supplement the children's personal stories.

Individualized learning allows for such limitless variation that teachers using this approach need clerical assistance for record-keeping.

## THE PARENTAL ROLE

The first teachers that a child is exposed to are the parents. The family becomes, in many ways, a young child's first "classroom". It is largely through constant exposure to language that the baby learns to talk. Home learning is not necessarily, however, the result of a direct teaching experience. Parents do not always consciously teach their child how to speak. Children are more likely to learn from observing others communicating and from a desire to interact with others and make their wishes known.

Parents who enjoy reading and have a large selection of books in their home provide their children with positive models. It is through observing their parents reading that the child learns that reading is highly valued. Taking children to the local library on a regular basis, as well as reading to them, teaches them to feel comfortable around books and reinforces the idea that reading is important and enjoyable.

The interest that you, as parents, have in books is frequently reflected in the manner in which your children relate to schooling. Children who come from families where there is a good deal of reading usually tend to do better in school.

## THE PARENTS' RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHILD'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Children need a happy home atmosphere as much as a comfortable physical environment. Children who are in continual emotional turmoil from family strife

and pressure will probably have difficulty with most aspects of the school situation, including reading. Excessive emphasis on your child's success in school can be as damaging to development as complete disinterest in your child's progress. Avoid comparing children. Never say, "I wish you were as smart as your friend, Johnny," or "Why did you get a 'B'? Johnny got an 'A'!" Comparison may easily destroy a child's self-image, give a self-defeatist attitude, produce anxiety and hostility toward others and create a negative "losing" personality. Reasonable expectations, a helping hand, genuine encouragement in whatever a child does and a strong belief in his or her capabilities are vital for a child's success, not just in school but in other aspects of life as well.

Parents should encourage their children to bring home the materials they are reading in the classroom. They should show interest in what their children are reading by asking questions about reading content. Parents should have their children read to them in order to help them acquire positive attitudes toward reading and reinforce their developing reading skills. Parents should read with interest what their children have written in school and concentrate on the positive features of their work. Parents who show a lack of interest in a child's school experiences are often the parents of children who are indifferent to school. The children receive the message that school is not important. One way parents demonstrate interest in their children's school progress is by attending parent-teacher conferences and general school meetings.

## PARENTAL ASSISTANCE IN READING INSTRUCTION AT HOME

A survey conducted in the late 1960's showed that almost all parents in the survey offered to help with their child's reading instruction when asked to do so, and the parents of children with reading "problems" were asked more frequently than the parents of average and good readers.[7]

Parents of children who are having difficulty with reading or who are "slow" readers should meet with the child's classroom teacher to see how they can help their child do better. Teachers who ask parents for assistance should discuss with them the nature of their child's problem and provide the parents with some practical guidance for helping their child at home. Providing parents with specific suggestions should facilitate learning at home and avoid any conflicts between the teacher and the parents regarding the method of instruction.

Active solicitation of information about the basics of the child's reading program is essential for all parents. It is important for a parent to be familiar with the nature of the child's school environment, the teacher, instructional methods, etc. The vast majority of school systems make little or no effort to provide information to parents about the objectives of the reading program and the means which teachers use to achieve these goals.[8]

Parents should contact teachers and arrange to have them explain the reading program. They need never wait for the teachers to make the first move to arrange for a meeting. It is a parent's right to know what approach is being taken to teach their young children. Without such knowledge, it is very difficult to understand a child's difficulties and to provide help.

It is also important to realize that teachers and school programs are far from being perfect. Too often teachers label slow learners as "backward" or even "stupid." Perhaps the fault is not with the child but with the teacher, the reading program or both. Parents should always keep several possibilities in mind:

1) For particular children, with special learning needs, an individualized reading program may be necessary. Some reading programs used in schools may actually promote what teachers will later call "learning disabilities."

2) A particular teacher's "teaching style" may interfere with a child's receptivity. An overdemanding or insensitive teacher may create an anxiety-producing situation for the child which inhibits the effective learning of reading.

3) Parents are often intimidated by a teacher's expertise. However, a close examination of the teacher may reveal that the "expertise" was more apparent than real.

Parents should not jump to place blame for any possible reading "problems" on their child's abilities or on themselves for their own imagined shortcomings.

## PARENTS AND PRE-READING

An effective teacher will always try to find out what cognitive skills have been acquired by a child. An adequate understanding of a child's interests and general experience is important both for the classroom and the home. Find out what interests the children. What turns them on? What have they already discovered in exploring the stimulating world of books? The starting point for a learning situation is the child and not the particular subject matter. Children are naturally inquisitive and enjoy experiencing and learning about the world around them. Training for them is a game and all children love games. Play learning games with your child. Buy them, borrow them, or make up your own. Create new variations on old games and, although it is true that not all games contribute to the acquisition of reading skills, they can all help to build a positive relationship between parent and child.

Before children learn the alphabet, before they learn that words are the picture equivalents of specific sounds, they must develop the ability to think clearly. This is basic for all but the most simple forms of learning. Language and the ability to think are closely connected. If you ask, "What can I do to encourage my children to read?" - "Encourage them to think things through." is the best answer. Games usually help children to learn to distinguish between various concepts: for instance, up from down; in from out; red from brown. Learning about colors can be accomplished through "color games": How many blue things are in this room? How many red? While learning colors, the children are also learning to name and describe their immediate world. There may be something green in the corner, or on the table; it's new; the children know it's green but they don't yet know what it is. They will be learning something new about their world: another object - another word.

Games that relate specifically to reading can be divided into two distinct types: 1) those that are primarily used to interest a child in reading; and

2) games that teach specific reading skills. The first type can be a basic part of the pre-reading stage in a child's development.

The most important single factor in developing your children's desire to read is constant exposure to books at home as a natural, pleasant part of their daily life. It is important that they associate reading with happy experiences. A child who is having a good time when using books will probably want to continue this association. Games are a good way to ensure this happening.

Children love to use their imaginations. You can find numerous opportunities to combine reading to children with the expression of their creative powers. You could utilize the natural story-telling powers of the child. No doubt, time and again, when you are reading to your child (especially a familiar or favorite story) he or she has taken the book from you and proceeded to "read" it to you, instead, adding new things as he or she goes along! Encourage this practice as much as you can as it develops good habits in the child and is an experience children really enjoy.

Take any children's story and ask your child to add to it or change it: perhaps create a new ending. The child's inventive mind can suggest numerous endings for a story. This activity can be either an individual or a group game. New characters can be added to the plot, or a new beginning can be written. The story can be dramatized. Show enthusiasm when children choose to act out parts of the story, or all of it. Encourage them to adopt the roles of various characters, invented or already present in the story; they may want to make a skit.

Later, individually or as part of a small group, children can create new stories involving characters from stories that have been read to them. New characters can also be created for an original story. The possibilities are endless.

Get children to make their own books. They can put together a set of their drawings to tell a story. As they turn the pages of their self-made storybook (each picture in it representing part of the story they "read" to you) they are developing associations and a pattern that will be valuable later on when they begin to learn to read.

Make books part of the child's life as much as possible. When you go on a picnic, don't just rely on swimming and ball for entertainment. Throw in a story or two to read as well. Before you go on vacation, make a trip to the library to pick out special stories to bring with you as a natural part of your preparations. Libraries have extended loan periods just for this purpose.

Let children see how useful books are for answering questions that people around them can't answer, for finding out special information on any topic that interests them. Set an example. You've forgotten some of the words to a song you're teaching them? Get a songbook from the library and look the words up. The children will see that the missing words were found in a book. Make a point of looking up answers together to some of those pressing queries your child makes. Though you must often simplify the answer considerably, the child still learns the all-important point that the information he or she wanted could be found by reading.

Expose your children to a variety of books. Children's poetry - funny, fanciful, moving, sometimes describing the great sensitivity the child's own impressions

or feelings - makes a delightful change from, or addition to, the bedtime story. Riddle books, tall tales, legends from different countries or any writing that provides an opportunity for shared reading pleasure all help to nourish a healthy and interested attitude toward books which will make learning to read easier later on.

Help your children find books about the topics that interest them such as boats, animals, cars, how to make things, etc. and read these books to them often. As you will not always have time to read to them just when they want you to, they will look forward to the time when they can read to themselves without having to wait for your free time.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING SKILLS

A variety of approaches, including a great many games, can be used to teach children basic reading skills.[9] Beginning with the alphabet, you can devise numerous games which make the various letters and their sounds familiar to children. Revise games like "Snap" and "Fish" so that letters must be matched instead of pictures. Puzzles matching letters with pictures are very popular with children. Adapt Bingo to letters instead of numbers. Children have a knack for remembering with ease things that appeal to their sense of humor. Tongue twisters are good for laughs as they repeat the same letters and sounds and tickle the funnybone as well. As children start linking different sounds with particular letters, make a game of finding words in signs above stories, on billboards or trucks, names, places, etc. which begin with a previously chosen letter. Have a race to see who can be the first to find three words that begin with 'p' for example.

Find opportunities to use written words. Try using place cards at meals which your child can put out when helping to set the table. This practice will soon make written names of brothers and sisters, Mom and Dad, familiar. In no time, he or she will also identify names that start with the same letter. Label things like the toybox, the dog's dish. Most pre-schoolers can recognize several written words such as "danger," "gas," "stop," "parking," "Dairy Queen" and "7-Up" from seeing them so often in signs around them. Instead of just pointing out farm animals, trains and buildings on car trips, see who can find and read the most signs; as the same ones recur so frequently, children will increase their sight vocabulary.

Another good way to make children comfortable with written words is to act as "secretary" and write down their ideas for them. Start with all the words they can think of on one special topic such as types of weather, the colors they know, animals they can name. Next, progress to joint stories, descriptions of places they went to such as the zoo or skating rink, all the sentences they can think of about the dog or the hamster. It is very important that you print these lists in their own words in large attractive letters and put them up where they can see them and "read" them to themselves and each other whenever they wish. It is surprising how many words a child picks up in this way. See who can tell the funniest story, the most exciting, the scariest - and write it down. Children take great pride in their own written stories and will try to figure out the various words.

A child can soon read a simple vocabulary of common words, with names thrown in as extras, if you use that vocabulary to write stories which deal with familiar people and subjects. Stories about the family pets, the neighborhood, friends (who, along with your children can be central characters in the stories), trips the children are going on such as to the circus or even to the hospital, will have great appeal and provide strong motivation for learning to read.

Underlying the ideas presented in this paper is the necessity to have good communication between you and your children. A well-intentioned parent can all too easily destroy the natural learning receptivity of the child. There are a few don'ts that must be strongly emphasized if the proper learning environment is to be provided for the child:

1) Don't force books on a child.

2) Don't give word drills.

3) Don't embarrass a child by discussing reading problems in front of guests or friends.

4) Don't compare your child unfavorably with others; it is easy to weaken a child's self-image.

5) Don't force a child to read at home.

6) Don't get a textbook or work-book for use in the home environment.

The last point above is of particular importance. As far as possible, parents should try to provide an indirect approach for teaching their children. The last thing a child needs is to have the home turned into a classroom. A regimented program in the home could very easily have a negative effect on children. Instead of attracting them to reading and books, it might scare them away. As soon as reading and books are identified with unpleasant associations, a reading problem is well on its way to beginning.

As parents, remember that, above all, it is your own attitude towards reading that will have one of the strongest influences on your child. No matter how much you encourage children to read, it is not likely that they will respond well if they never see you read. Your appreciation and enjoyment of books will very likely be reflected in the attitude of your child toward reading.

## NOTES

p. 4 [1] Robert C. Aukerman. *Approaches to Beginning Reading,* (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.: New York, 1971), p. 299.

p. 4 [2] R. V. Allen. "The Language Experience Approach", *Teaching Young Children to Read*; Ed. by Warren G. Cutts, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1964), p. 59.

p. 5 [3] From Robert M. Wilson and Maryanne Hall. *Reading and the Elementary School Child*, (Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1972).

p. 7 [4] Robert Karlin, *Perspectives on Elementary Reading,* p. 146.

p. 8 [5] Wilson and Hall, *Reading and the Elementary School Child,* p. 57.

p. 8 [6] Dolores Durkin, *ABC: Teaching Them to Read,* 1970, p. 117.

p. 10 [7] Robert M. Wilson and Donald W. Pfare, "Parents Can Help!", *The Reading Teacher,* Vol. 21, May 1968, pp. 758-761.

p. 10 [8] Austin and Morrison, *The First R,* "The Harvard Report on Reading in Elementary Schools", p. 162.

p. 13 [9] A particularly useful book is: *Tested Ways to Help Your Child Learn,* Virginia Burgess Warren, (Prentice Hall: New Jersey, 1961). This book has material which can be used to help students from pre-school through all grades of the public school system and into the early college years.

## APPENDIX A

### READING BOOKS FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Six books are listed below that could be helpful to you as parents in preparing your child for learning to read, helping your child with reading skills and creating games to improve reading skills. Check your local library for these books. For some, the publisher is listed and the book may be ordered from them. In some cases, only parts of the book may be helpful to parents, but they all do contain some useful advice; i.e., how the home environment can affect your child's reading abilities, how parents can help their children form good habits which will be useful when learning to read, how visual-aural discrimination skills can be acquired through daily experiences with your child, creating reading materials for your child, or how television can be helpful or detrimental to learning how to read.

Books Recommended for Parents:
Child Preparation for Reading

*A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading,* by Nancy Larrick
$3.95 Doubleday & Co., Inc., Garden City, NY

*The Disabled Reader,* Education of the Dyslexic Child, John Money (Ed.)
$8.50 The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, MD
Basically for teachers, teaching methods to help overcome all types of reading disabilities; a collection of 17 articles.

*Preparing Your Child for Reading,* by Miles A. Tinker
$5.95 Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 383 Madison Ave., New York, NY
Discusses how to prepare your child for reading through everyday experiences, how to help increase vocabulary, how to pick out subtle visual differences, and how to help distinguish sounds, among other topics. A book list for Pre-school through Grade 3 is included.

*Helping Your Child Improve His Reading,* by Ruth Strang
E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York, 1962
How parents can supplement the school's reading program at home and how they can encourage their children to read.

*Games to Improve Your Child's English,* by Abraham B. Hurwitz and Arthur Goddard
$9.95 Simon & Schuster, NY
Word games for children who already read; to help build vocabulary, spelling, grammar, group games, rhyming, alphabet, and sentence games, to name a few.

*Reading With a Smile, 90 Reading Games That Work*, by Audrey Ann Burie and Mary Ann Heltshe
$9.95 Acropolis Books Ltd., 2400 17th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20009
Reading readiness games, basic reading skills games, content-oriented reading games for children learning to read and helpful hints for the parent or teacher making the games.

## APPENDIX B

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS TO HELP IMPROVE READING SKILLS

Parents, the following list of books are recommended for improving your child's reading skills. These books are designed primarily for beginning readers. They have been selected for their usefulness, visual appeal, concentration on skills and concepts in reading and for their overall level of creativeness and imaginativeness in children's books. Look in your local library or bookstore where most of them should be available. If they are not, recommend them to the children's librarian in your area.

Some series, such as the *First Readers With Ten Word Texts*, are specifically designed for children ages 3-7. These age limits are flexible and selection of books for your children should be based upon their individual reading level, not necessarily their chronological age. Today there are many book series designed for beginning readers. The emphasis varies from series to series. Below, each series is briefly explained, then several books are listed. Occasionally, an exceptionally creative book is marked with an asterisk (*).

I. *First Readers With Ten Word Texts*, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., Reading, Mass.

For beginning readers, ages 3-7, beautifully illustrated, easy to read, uses only ten different words per book, illustrations follow text closely to help comprehension for beginning readers.

*Beware of a Very Hungry Fox* by Patty Wolcott, illus. by Lucinda McQueen
*The Forest Fire* by Patty Wolcott, illus. by Robert Binks
**Where Did That Naughty Hamster Go?* by Patty Wolcott, illus. by Rosekrans Hoffmann
*The Marvelous Mud Washing Machine*
*Tuna Fish Sandwiches*
*Super Sam and the Salad Garden*
*I'm Going to New York to Visit the Queen*
*Pickle Pickle Pickle Juice*
*My Shadow and I*
*The Cake Story*

II. *Bright and Early Books*, Random House, New York

Written and designed with humor, rhythm and a strong relationship between simple words and simple pictures.

**Foot Book* by Dr. Seuss

*The Eye Book* by Theo LeSeig
*The Ear Book* by Al Perkins
*Inside, Outside, Upside Down* by Stan and Jan Berenstein
*I'll Teach My Dog 100 Words* by Michael Frith
*The Many Mice of Mr. Brice* by Theo LeSeig
*Great Day for UP* by Dr. Seuss
*Bears in the Night* by the Berensteins
*He Bear, She Bear* by the Berensteins

III. *Beginner Books*, Random House, New York

Published by Random House as more advanced readers than the *Bright and Early Series*, but is done in similar style with same purposes.

*The Bear's Almanac* by Stan and Jan Berenstein
*Some of Us Walk, Some Fly, Some Swim* by Michael Frith (Vocabulary-dictionary of opposites, comparisons, etc.)
**The Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss
*Oh, the Thinks You Can Think* by Dr. Seuss
*The Cat in the Hat Comes Back* by Dr. Seuss
*Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss
**Fox in Socks, A Tongue Twister for Super Children* by Dr. Seuss

IV. *Dictionaries*

*The Strawberry Picture Dictionary* by Richard Hefter
With sentences and illustrations demonstrating words.
*The Cat in the Hat Beginner Book DICTIONARY* by the Cat and P. D. Eastman
A humorous approach is taken.
*The Charlie Brown Dictionary* by Charles M. Schulz
Based on the Rainbow Dictionary by Wendell W. Wright, Ph.D. and assisted by Helene Laird, Random House, New York, $7.95.
**Richard Scarry's Storybook Dictionary* by Richard Scarry
Words defined with sentences and stories which put them in an appropriate context for easier understanding of meanings of words.

V. **Sesame Street Books*, Random House, Children's T[illegible] Workshop, New York

These books are based on the television program *Sesame Street* and are "fun" books for learning reading concepts and skills, number skills, general reading at various levels and many games are included also. Very humorous.

*The Sesame Street Storybook*
*Big Bird's Busy Book*

With beginning readers, the following are best used with adults reading and helping with the text, for it is not always simple, basic reading.

*The Sesame Street 1, 2, 3 Storybook*, Stories about numbers from 1 to 10
*The Sesame Street ABC Storybook*
*The Sesame Street Book of Fairy Tales*

VI. **The WHO AM I Series*, Santillana Publishing Company, 575 Lexington Avenue, New York, New York 10022 $3.95 each

A series of 10 books centered on the theme of Nature and Ecology. Simple texts and imaginative creative illustrations. Designed to enrich the child's understanding of natural and social environment. Good when read with an adult.

Texts by Jose Luis Garcia Sanchez and Miguel Angel Pacheco

*I Am a Tree*
*I Am the Sun**
*I Am the Air**
*I Am a Raindrop*
*I Am a Rock*
*I Am Fire**
*I Am a Fish**
*I Am a Bird**
*I Am a Child*
*I Am a Wild Animal*

VII. **Strawberry Books* by Richard Hefter, Larousse & Co., Inc., New York $2.95 each

An excellent series of books for beginning readers with simple but creative illustrations.

*One White Crocodile Smile; A Number Book*
*Word Book* (general vocabulary builder with word-picture associations)
*Noses and Toes - An Up & Down & In & Out Book* (rhyming words and concepts)
*Things That Go* (about transportation of all types)
*Book of Colors*
**Yes and No - A Book of Opposites*
*Strawberry Mother Goose*
*A Noise in the Closet*
**An Animal Alphabet*

VIII. *I Can Read Books*

This series is divided into categories as follows: Early *I Can Read*, Science, Mysteries, Sports, History, General and Spanish series translated from English. These books are more

advanced and emphasize content. The story may be humorous, emotional or informative. It offers a wide variety of children's books.

**Frog and Toad Are Friends* by Arnold Lobel (there is a series of these excellent books)
*Small Pig* by Arnold Lobel
*Lucille* by Arnold Lobel
*The Drinking Gourd* by F. N. Monjo (A history book about the underground railroad system during the Civil War which grasps the essence of what really happened and what it meant to the people involved.)

IX. *Additional Books*

These books are not part of a series but are excellent books for various levels of beginning readers.

Dr. Seuss Books: On the whole, parents find these books especially amusing and interesting. They are ideal for reading to your child for you will enjoy them also.

*Hop on Pop* by Dr. Seuss, Random House, New York
*The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss
*Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories* by Dr. Seuss
**Alphabet World* by Barry Miller, MacMillan & Co., New York
A series of photographs that "discovers" the alphabet in one's urban environment, an imaginative, creative way of identifying the alphabet.
*The Island of the Skog* by Steven Kellogg
**An Invitation to the Butterfly Ball* by Jane Yolen, illus. by Jane B. Zalben, Parent's Magazine Press, New York.
A counting rhyme with an interesting tale to follow.
**Our Animal Friends at Maple Hill Farm* by Alice and Martin Provensen, Random House, New York $3.95
An excellent, humorous book about animals.
*Chicken Little* by Barry Zaid (designed in an original way), $1.95
*The Big City Book* by Annie Ingle, illus. by Tim and Greg Hildebrandt
**The Mix and Match Story Book*, illus. by David Gantz, Random House, New York
**Another Mix and Match Story Book*, illus. by Jane Little Fox
These two books are specially designed to play around with the position of a series of phrases to create new sentences with each combination. They are creative, humorous and help children with forming sentences.
**Pea Patch Island* by Polly Curren, illus. by Ronald Hilmer, Golden Press, New York: Western Publishing Co., Racine, Wis.
A great story.
**Where the Wild Things Are*, Story and pictures by Maurice Sendak
Ages 4-8. Excellent illustrations of make-believe "wild things".

## APPENDIX C

### GAMES THAT HELP CHILDREN LEARN AND ENJOY READING

In the book *Tested Ways to Help Your Child Learn* by Virginia Burgess Warren, there is a list of 215 booklets, games, toys and records that may be purchased to help your child to learn and enjoy reading. Several are listed below, with a brief description of the games and records. Most of these games are relatively inexpensive, cost under $5.00 and can be purchased from the company listed or in toy stores. Send to the company for a recent price list of educational games for children.

*Reading Flash Cards* - Alphabet, Pre-primer, Primer Words and Phonics Flash Card sets designed for use at home. Children can play with these alone and test themselves on "self-test sheets". School Aid Products, 8986 Manchester St., St. Louis, Missouri 63100.

*Rolling Reader Dice Game* - Seven cubes with words on them that create a sentence with each toss of the dice. The child unscrambles the words to make the sentence. Good for understanding sentence construction skills. Psych-Ed Games.

*Dial'N'Spell* - Designed for first through third graders to help associate the word that defines an object and its spelling. A dial card has pictures, and the child dials the letters to spell out the object in the picture. When spelling is correct, an arrow points to the picture. Milton Bradley Co., Springfield, Massachusetts 01100.

*Look, A Word Bingo Game* - Played like Bingo, except using words instead of numbers, 220 different words used. Designed for second to fourth graders. Helps build vocabulary. Gelles-Widmer Company, 7530 Forsyth Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63100.

*Words That Go Together* - For kindergarten through fourth grade; for one to six players. To help build vocabulary and learn spelling; colorful picture-word cards are grouped into different subject areas, such as vegetables, clothing, furniture. Department store, or write Milton Bradley Co., Springfield, Massachusetts 01100.

*Popper Words* - A game designed for beginning readers to learn 220 basic words that cannot be learned from picture-word associations. Gelles-Widmer Company, 7530 Forsyth Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri 63100.

*The Sentence Game* - Grades two through five. Picture-words and "popper" words are combined into phrase cards, which are then combined into sentences. Gelles-Widmer Company (address above).

*What the Letters Say* - Preschoolers, grades one and two. A phonics-sound game in which children learn the letter sounds. Gelles-Widmer Co. (address above).

*Animal Dominoes* - Preschoolers. Reading readiness game, using colorful, whimsical animal pictures. Ed-U-Cards Manufacturing Company.

*The Syl-la-ble Game* - Grades three and above. A two-deck card game. Played like Solitaire. It will help your children learn common beginning and ending syllables. Gelles-Widmer Co. (address above).

*The Verb Game* - Grades three through junior high. A game using verbs to help children learn the sounds of the English language. Gelles-Widmer Co. (address above).

*Kiddie Kards* - Ages four through ten. Helps teach reading, spelling, coordination and visual discrimination. A set of 24 cards, each is cut in half; heads and feet of animals are matched. Antioch Bookplate Company, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387.

*Picture-Word Games* - Grades one and two. To learn to read 95 most common nouns. Gelles-Widmer Co. (address above).

*Word Rummy Card Game* - 106 cards with which the child creates words from letters on cards. Played like Rummy. Helps build vocabulary and improve spelling. Jay Kay, P. O. Box 323, Van Nuys, California 91400.

*Throw-A-Word Dice Game* - Dice with letters on them; children throw 12 dice and form words with letters; helps spelling and vocabulary. Sunset House, 214 Sunset Bldg., Beverly Hills, California 90200.

*Pre-School Reading Readiness Games* - To develop attention and visual perception. Children match pictures. Gelles-Widmer Co. (address above).

In addition to, or instead of, purchasing games you may want to create some of your own. There is an especially creative and easy-to-follow book that has been written to help create games; *Reading With a Smile, 90 Reading Games That Work* by Audrey Ann Burie and May Ann Heltshe, 1975, an Instructor and Associate Professor at Millersville State College at Millersville. They created these games while teaching in primary school and they have all been used in the classroom but are also intended for use at home.

These games are designed to teach specific basic reading skills. If your child has a specific physical or perceptual disability, discuss with the reading teacher what reading exercises and games would be most appropriate for helping overcome the problem area. This book is an excellent

reference book to help you to create reading readiness games, basic reading skills games and content-oriented reading games.

The book is carefully organized into sections. First, there are "helpful hints" for making games and ways to organize and code them so the child can get the most out of them. Then the games are divided into three main categories, 1) Readiness Games; 2) Basic Reading Skills Games; and 3) Content-Oriented Reading Games. These are comprised of sub-categories, such as, visual motor, mental development, word perception, phonetic analysis, creative writing, etc. Each game lists which specific skill it is intended to help, such as variable vowel sounds, multiple meanings, homonyms, initial consonant sounds, etc. So, if your child is having difficulty in any specific area, you can create games to fit their individualized needs. The games are easy to make and your imagination can be let loose. Have your children help make the games, or create their own. It can be great fun and a natural relaxed learning environment for all involved.